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MANDATORY REVIEW
CASE # NLC 98-117
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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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16 May 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Intelligence on the Kurds

REFERENCE : Your memo to DCI dated 4 May 1979, Same Subject

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Your memorandum of May 4 posed three questions concerning the US intelligence effort on the Kurdish problem. Answers to those questions are provided below. [redacted] staff also prepared a collection summary on the same subject which I will send separately. [redacted]

A. Status of HUMINT and SIGINT collection planning.

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1. HUMINT: Efforts are underway to improve collection on the Kurdish problem. On balance, however, our capability is only poor to fair [redacted] State reporting emanates from our Embassies in Ankara, Tehran, Kuwait, Moscow, and Tripoli, our Interests Section in Baghdad and our Consulate in Adana. The latter is the best source of information on the Kurds from Turkey, and would deteriorate markedly if the post is closed this coming fiscal year. Political constraints and travel restrictions severely restrict State reporting in Iraq and Iran. There are Defense Attache offices in Ankara and Tehran and an active collection program in Turkey. Capabilities however are limited, particularly in Tehran, by the same political and travel constraints facing State officers. DAOs in other regional states and Moscow are also tasked to report on the Kurdish problem. Both State and Defense reporting also reflects second and third country sources. [redacted]

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B. Ability to exploit open source material, particularly from the Soviet Union.

Open source collection capability against the Kurdish situation is scanty because FBIS currently has no Kurdish language capability and because limited information is available in non-Kurdish media. An attempt is currently being made to recruit personnel with Kurdish language capability.

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Coverage of non-Kurdish media provides virtually no information on Kurdish tribal or military organizations, plans, intentions and the like. FBIS has ordered two Turkish papers which deal with the Kurdish problem, one of which may be in Kurdish. When it acquires a Kurdish language capability, it will also order a Kurdish language newspaper in Soviet Armenia, the only known Soviet Kurdish-language publication.

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Soviet open sources carry essentially factual reportage on Kurdish issues. Coverage is primarily from Radio Moscow and TASS. In recent months, Moscow has reported on clashes in Iranian Kurdestan but has counselled restraint. The Soviets have strongly denied charges of interference in Iranian domestic affairs. In general, Soviet open source reporting is cautious on problems between Kurds and their respective governments.

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C. US knowledge of outside support for Kurdish dissident movements.

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Information on foreign support for Kurdish movements is infrequent and sketchy. Based on the information available, the extent of such support cannot be determined.

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1. Libya: Col. Qadhafi has publicly stated Libyan support for Iraqi Kurds, but we do not know whether he has backed his words with deeds.

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2. Israel: It is plausible to surmise that the Israelis are supporting Iraqi Kurds, but we have no information to back it up.

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3. Soviet Union: Information available on Soviet support is derived mainly from third country sources and is highly suspect. In fact, we have no conclusive evidence of official Soviet support for the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq or Iran. In our judgment, Soviet support for the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq would be particularly harmful for bilateral ties between the Soviets and these two states, both of which regard the Kurdish problem as a sensitive internal matter. One report indicates, however, that the Soviets promised support indirectly--through pro-Soviet Middle East communist parties--for the Tudeh Party which, in turn, will provide material and personnel to the various autonomy movements in Iran, including the Kurds.

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